ii. Waiver of overdue interest and overdue loans of weavers/PWCSs/Apex Societies as on 31st March, 2006.

The total financial implication of the financial package is estimated to be Rs. 1295 crores, which includes financial assistance required for weaver cooperatives in Andhra Pradesh.

The above proposals are under consideration of the Government.

Opposition to extension of visa to Ms. Tasleema

†*296. SHRI BALAVANT *ALIAS* BAL APTE:

SHRI SHREEGOPAL VYAS:

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that some people are opposing extension of visa to Ms. Tasleema;

(b) whether she has asked for refuge;

(c) whether her novel 'Lajja' is the cause behind it;

(d) whether her health is a matter of concern; and

(e) whether some specific measures are being taken to keep her mentally fit?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI SRIPRAKASH JAISWAL): (a) to (e) Ms. Taslima Nasrin, an author of Bangladesh origin, is a citizen of Sweden, holding a Swedish passport. She came to India on 25.01.2006 and her visa for stay in India has been extended from time to time. The last extension of visa has been granted to her for six months upto 17.08.2008.

Ms. Nasrin has been a subject of controversy on account of her writings, including the novel "Lajja". Some organisations have, opposed the grant of extension of visa to Ms. Taslima Nasrin. Ms. Taslima Nasrin has been provided with appropriate medical treatment and facilities, as and when required.

Leakage of funds meant for rural development

*297. SHRIMATI HEMA MALINI: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that process of releasing funds for rural development is cumbersome, since first it goes to State capitals wherefrom it goes to district headquarters and in the process lots of leakages of funds do take place; and

(b) if so, the details of steps Governments is taking to plug the leakages?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI RAGHUVANSH PRASAD SINGH): (a) and (b) No, Sir. At present about 90% of funds under various programmes of the Ministry of Rural Development are released directly to District Rural Development Agencies, District Water and Sanitation Missions and to the State Rural Road Development Agencies (SRRDAs). The SRRDAs are autonomous bodies. As such there is no scope for delay or leakage of funds.

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

Till December, 2006 about 40% funds were being transferred by means of Telegraphic Transfer and the balance was sent through Demand Drafts. Now about 98% of the total Budget is being remitted through electronic means i.e. through Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) and Core Banking Solutions (CBS), etc. and the time lag has been significantly reduced.

Sensitizing panchayats about NREGS

*298. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI:
SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA:

Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) as the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) is covering 330 districts from April, 2007, whether fool-proof modalities have been evolved to avoid any discrepancies pointed out in the CAG Report for period covering February, 2006-March, 2007; and

(b) as the Gram Panchayats have been actively involved in issuance of Job-Cards and giving work or compensation thereof to the eligible rural household, whether panchayats have been sensitized to extend positive support to help intended beneficiaries under this scheme?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI RAGHUVANSH PRASAD SINGH): (a) Ministry of Rural Development had requested CAG to undertake performance audit of the implementation of NREGA in phase I districts for the year 2006-07. Accordingly, CAG conducted audit in 68 districts of 26 States. CAG submitted its draft report on 17.12.2007 to the Ministry. The draft report has been examined in the Ministry and has also been shared with all the States. CAG has made a total of 1416 findings in its draft report. These mainly relate to procedures such as application for employment, issue of dated receipts, job card formats, muster rolls, maintenance of record registers. In addition, 34 cases relate to financial matters. These are regarding instances of use of funds for non permissible activities/ineligible persons/agencies and incorrect accounting of expenditure. The States have given their responses to the observations made by CAG in the draft report. These have been sent to CAG. State responses are in the process of examination by CAG for finalisation of the performance audit report of NREGA.

The government has evolved the following modalities to avoid the discrepancies pointed out in the draft CAG report.

(1) Transparency

(i) Payment of wages through workers accounts in Banks/post offices:

(a) Instructions have been issued to state governments for coordination with the Department of Posts to ensure that accounts of NREGA workers are opened in Banks/Post offices for payment of wages and are made fully effective during 2008-09.

(b) Draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the State governments and Department of Post to ensure smooth payment to workers through their postal accounts is being finalised.